

REMARKS

In view of the above amendment, Applicants believe the pending application is in condition for allowance.

Claims 1, 2, 4-8, 10-12, 15-18, and 20-23 are now present in this application. Claims 1, 4, 7, 12, and 18 are independent. By this Amendment, claims 9, 13, 14, and 19 have been cancelled, without prejudice or disclaimer, and claims 7, 10, 12, 15, 16, 18, and 20 have been amended.

Reconsideration of this application, as amended, is respectfully requested.

Information Disclosure Citation

Applicants thank the Examiner for considering the reference supplied with the Information Disclosure Statement filed April 15, 2007, and for providing Applicants with an initialed copy of the PTO-1449 or PTO-SB08 form filed therewith.

Rejections under 35 U.S.C. §103

Claims 7, 12, 13, 18, and 21 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over JP '995 in view of either Ornas or JP '208. Further claims 16, 17, and 23 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over the prior art cited against claims 12 and 18, and in further view of either Loniello or Calabrese. These rejections are respectfully traversed.

With regard to the rejection of claims 7, 21, and 23, while not conceding the appropriateness of the Examiner's rejection, but merely to advance prosecution of the instant application, Applicants respectfully submit that independent claim 7 has been amended to include the limitations of objected-to allowable claim 9, thereby automatically placing independent claim 7 into condition for allowance, along with dependent claims 21 and 23.

With regard to the rejection of claim 12, 13, 16, and 17, while not conceding the appropriateness of the Examiner's rejection, but merely to advance prosecution of the instant application, Applicants respectfully submit that independent claim 7 has been amended to include the limitations of objected-to allowable claim 14, thereby automatically placing independent claim 12 into condition for allowance, along with dependent claims 16 and 17.

With regard to the rejection of claim 18, while not conceding the appropriateness of the Examiner's rejection, but merely to advance prosecution of the instant application, Applicants respectfully submit that independent claim 18 has been amended to include the limitations of objected-to allowable claim 19, thereby automatically placing independent claim 18 into condition for allowance.

Allowable Subject Matter

The Examiner states that claims 1, 2, and 4-6 are allowed; and that claims 9-11, 14, 15, 19, 20, and 22 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form

Applicants thank the Examiner for the early indication of allowable subject matter in this application.

As set forth above, the limitations of objected-to claim 9 has been added into independent claim 7, and therefore independent claim 7 should be in condition for allowance. Also, claims 8, 10, 11, and 21-23 depend, either directly or indirectly, from independent claim 7, and are therefore allowable based on their dependence from claim 7, which is believed to be allowable.

As set forth above, the limitations of objected-to claim 14 has been added into independent claim 12, along with intervening claim 13, and therefore independent claim 12 should be in condition for allowance. Also, claims 15, 16, and 17 depend, either directly or indirectly, from independent claim 12, and are therefore allowable based on their dependence from claim 12, which is believed to be allowable.

As set forth above, the limitations of objected-to claim 19 has been added into independent claim 18, and therefore independent claim 18 should be in condition for allowance. Also, claim 20 depends from independent claim 18, and is therefore allowable based on its dependence from claim 18, which is believed to be allowable.

Additional Cited References

Since the remaining references cited by the Examiner have not been utilized to reject the claims, but have merely been cited to show the state of the art, no comment need be made with respect thereto.

Conclusion

All of the stated grounds of rejection have been properly traversed, accommodated, or rendered moot. Applicants therefore respectfully request that the Examiner reconsider all presently outstanding rejections and that they be withdrawn. It is believed that a full and complete response has been made to the outstanding Office Action, and as such, the present application is in condition for allowance.

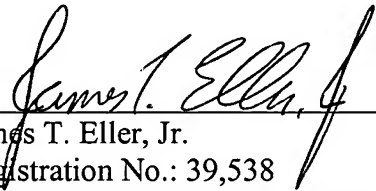
If the Examiner believes, for any reason, that personal communication will expedite prosecution of this application, the Examiner is invited to telephone James T. Eller, Jr., Registration No. 39,538, at (703) 205-8000, in the Washington, D.C. area.

Prompt and favorable consideration of this Amendment is respectfully requested.

If necessary, the Commissioner is hereby authorized in this, concurrent, and future replies, to charge payment or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 02-2448 for any additional fees required under 37 C.F.R. §§ 1.16 or 1.17; particularly, extension of time fees.

Dated: July 23, 2007

Respectfully submitted,

By 
James T. Eller, Jr.
Registration No.: 39,538
BIRCH, STEWART, KOLASCH & BIRCH, LLP
8110 Gatehouse Road
Suite 100 East
P.O. Box 747
Falls Church, Virginia 22040-0747
(703) 205-8000
Attorney for Applicants